

**COMMUNITY DIALOG  
ON  
TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE**

**Meeting Summary of April 2, 2003**

Supervisor Bulova welcomed attendees of the sixth meeting of the Community Dialog on Transportation and Land Use (Community Dialog). She explained that the topic for the evening's program was a closer look at the growth/development side of the equation. She stated that the questions on the agenda captured some of the issues that have been raised by members of the group in past meetings. Focusing on these questions should help us get to the heart of the debate. She introduced each of the speakers. Back by popular demand were Jim Zook, Director, Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning, and David Bobzien, Fairfax County Attorney. She said that the group had also asked to hear from both smart growth and the development perspectives and she introduced Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director, Coalition for Smarter Growth, and Clark Massie, a past president of the Northern Virginia Building Industry Association and board member, Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance.

Panelists were asked to make a five-minute opening statement, weaving into it their thoughts/experiences with past and present attempts to "better manage" our growth in Fairfax County.

Stewart Schwartz began by explaining that five years ago he started the Coalition for Smarter Growth. He also referred to other organizations (The Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation) with a similar mission and referenced the brochure *Making the Most of Metro*, as well as his brochure, *Traffic Solutions*, which outlines his blueprint. He said there is a huge movement of change in the county. He stated that there are no transportation solutions to transportation problems and that the solutions lie on the land use side.

Schwartz said that we didn't anticipate the level of growth in Fairfax with its dependence on cars. There will be one million more people in the region over the next 20 years, and how we plan for this will affect our quality of life. There are three things that need to be looked at with all transportation projects: land use, pricing solutions (for example, HOT lanes) and land prices. As an example, he mentioned a proposal that would allow a person owning only one car to qualify for a higher mortgage, thus allowing the person to live closer in. See [smartergrowth.net](http://smartergrowth.net) for more information.

He cited such other tools for smarter growth as transit-oriented development, like that found at Ballston, and revitalization. He said that Prince William and Prince George's counties want more jobs. We need more affordable housing. We need a balance of jobs and affordable housing in the right places with the right mix of office and retail uses. We need "walkability" (not having to walk across four lanes of traffic) from residential uses. We need pedestrian connections to all uses. We need to have public uses accessible.

He said that there are 3-5% solutions that are based on how we design our communities. Mixed-use, he said, can be done in a Dillon Rule state.

Next, Clark Massie spoke about the complexity of the situation. He said we needed to take a regional look at the growth patterns in the Greater Washington Metropolitan region. He said we live in a free market society, where we can't dictate where people will live and in what type of housing they'll choose to live in. There is a need for affordable or "work force housing." According to the following statistics for Fairfax County:

- 2001 census figures showed that median assessed values for housing types were as follows:

- multifamily \$ 94,000
  - townhouse 166,000
  - single family 288,000
  - (detached)

- median family income was \$ 99,000
  - median assessed house value was \$ 297,000.

- In 2002, the average sales price of housing was as follows:

- multifamily \$ 157,000
  - townhouse 260,000
  - single family 463,000
  - (detached)

- In 2003, the least expensive new houses were as follows:

- multifamily \$ 128,000
  - townhouse 286,000
  - single family 400,000
  - (detached)

- Remaining vacant land in Fairfax County is roughly 12% and, of that, 80% is planned for residential uses as follows:

- multifamily 69.0%
  - townhouse 15.5%
  - single family 15.5%
  - (detached)

Mr. Massie then discussed a handout from a study done by the George Mason University Center called *Regional Analysis of Future Supply and Demand*. He said that from 1970 to 2000, there were 1.7 million new jobs created and one million new households, which translate into 1.67 workers per household. The forecast for the region is 1.5 million new jobs by 2025 and 769,000 new households or 1.96 workers per household. Based on current land use plans, there will be a housing shortage of 175,000 units. When added to the current shortfall of 43,000 units, it is projected that by 2025, there will be a shortage of 218,000 housing units. This will mean doubling up or commutes of a greater distance

than the study area, which included parts of West Virginia. When you add in Loudoun County's recent downzoning of 70,000 units, the shortfall in housing is 300,000 units in 2025.

There has been a failure to provide affordable housing. With higher housing prices closer in, development has increased in the outlying regions, which has added to the transportation problem. Transportation problems can depress job growth. We need job growth in order to maintain healthy economic growth.

Supervisor Bulova next called on Jim Zook. She reminded the group that Jim is responsible for overseeing our *Comprehensive Plan*, which includes not only land use and transportation planning, but also all of the infrastructure needed to support the *Plan*. He is also responsible for the Zoning Ordinance and everything associated with its administration and enforcement.

Jim Zook began his remarks by recalling something that former School Superintendent Bud Spillane used to say, "Remember, the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." He said that we have to plan for a positive future for future generations. We have to try to achieve our county goals, while balancing the conflict between our goals. We need to consider the consequences of no growth versus healthy economic development. The reality is that the region will grow.

He went on to say that since the 1950s, the American dream has been to own one's own home. Taxes are not popular, but people are demanding services. Government needs to facilitate social equity and social responsibility. He then outlined the key purposes of local government, which follow:

- Providing sound environmental practices;
- Not stopping growth, but shaping how growth occurs;
- Providing convenient places to live, work, shop and play;
- Providing accessible public facilities;
- Providing future areas for growth; and
- Managing growth.

Zook stated that here in Fairfax County we manage growth through our *Comprehensive Plan* that was adopted in 1975. We have a process for amending it to shape growth. He cited two examples of major changes to limit growth – the Occoquan downzoning and the Cs and Is text amendments. He said Loudoun County is using blunt force to control growth, rather than through planning and zoning.

He said that in Fairfax County we are concentrating future residential growth in areas where we can collocate with employment sites. We are sustaining older neighborhoods, which are the key to providing affordable housing. Zoning enforcement plays a role in this effort. We are sustaining older commercial areas through revitalization efforts. He then referred to Stewart Schwartz's earlier remark about there being no transportation solutions and said that there is a role for transportation planning as a solution.

Mr. Zook said that Fairfax County has a strong environmental policy for which we got the Governor's Award. We received Gold Star recognition for our Chesapeake Bay Ordinance.

He went on to say that we need to invest in human services to assist our most vulnerable citizens in difficult times. He said other important policies for shaping growth in Fairfax County include our public schools, sanitary sewer services areas and new infill policy. He concluded his remarks by stating that our policy of community involvement in shaping policy is extremely important.

Supervisor Bulova then noted that a visitor had joined the group and she introduced Providence Supervisor Gerry Connolly. She said that other supervisors' staff members have visited our sessions, but that Supervisor Connolly was the first to attend personally.

Supervisor Connolly took note of the excellent participation of the Braddock group and stated that in Providence District citizens were involved in every step of the Comprehensive Planning process. Supervisor Bulova mentioned the dedication and commitment of the Community Dialog group and cited the high attendance, even with the snow and outbreak of war.

David Bobzien then discussed growth patterns and smart growth from his perspective as a former planning commissioner under then Centreville (now Hunter Mill) District Supervisor Martha Pennino. He said that input from the public, the voices of the neighborhood, is listened to. It's not true when people say that they aren't listened to or that only the developer is heard. He said that no one is opposed to smart growth. We need to emphasize matching up transit and housing, so that there is less reliance on cars. He said that if you look around you can see some smart growth and some growth that is not so smart. He noted that at the Vienna Metro station, you'll see townhouses, although there is some multifamily being built. In charettes, you'll hear the need for rail to Dulles, but the planned densities in the corridor aren't high enough to support rail.

Mr. Bobzien said that we must make wise use of the remaining land. Infill properties were passed over before, sometimes because they were too difficult to build on. Now there are engineering solutions that will allow development on some of those parcels. With cluster development, we are able to concentrate the development on a portion of the site and preserve the environmentally sensitive areas. He then cited an example where it didn't work. There was a 45-acre site that the developer wanted to develop with clustering in order to avoid the non-tidal wetlands. Five or six of the neighbors, including a non-tidal wetlands vegetation expert, were against the development because of the possible loss of skunk cabbage. As a result, the developer went forward with "by-right" development. The density was less, but the developer built over the wetlands (a type/size not regulated by the Army Corps of Engineers). He said that the development could have been better, but citizen opposition prevented that. This is often the other side of the smart growth issue. The use of clustering would have been better, but the neighbors didn't want development that didn't look like theirs.

Mr. Bobzien cited an example of thwarted smart growth when, in the Springfield District a number of trails were taken off the *Comprehensive Plan*. Another example, in the Reston area, was at Route 7 and Baron Cameron Parkway, where there was a proposal to build a pathway from the existing development to Bishop Gateway, the new development. The neighbors said “no way” because it would allow kids to go back and forth between the two developments. In the face of strong citizen opposition, the Board of Supervisors approved the rezoning without the pathway. As a result, children have to exit one development and go out to the street to get to the other community.

He said that in Reston Town Center big box retail got the rezoning they needed to come in. People coming in do help the economy, but it’s a mess transportation-wise. He concluded with the example of McNair Farms, which the neighbors likened to “Nightmare on Elm Street” and the Board of Supervisors voted “no” to it.

Supervisor Bulova announced that the presentations were finished and that the group could now ask questions of the panelists or comment on the presentations until 8:45 PM. At that time, she would discuss how the group would move on to the next phase of the Community Dialog.

Supervisor Connolly stated that he would have to leave for another meeting, but wanted to make a few remarks. He said that Merrifield is the third largest development center in the county. It is mostly an industrial zone district. The re-planning of Merrifield took three years and involved 200 to 250 people, both citizens and businessmen, which broke into three groups. They discussed what they wanted to have there, including a town center, streetscape and sidewalks. In the three years, they met 56 times. Smart growth, incentives, etc., were considered during the process. Critical to the process was achieving buy-in from the residential community. This was accomplished because of the intensive public participation in the process.

George Barker noted that in 1950 there were 300,000 people in the region, with half the people in Fairfax County. We decided to have a say in where the growth would occur and we did so by adopting our Comprehensive Plan. Since 1990, the growth in the region has occurred less in Fairfax and more in Loudoun and Prince William counties, where there is no transit. This means longer commutes. If we don’t have the density here, then we have the transportation problems because of the employment growth here.

Barbara Willams asked about the daily commute between Virginia and Maryland as noted by the amount of bridge traffic and wondered if this had been studied.

Stewart Schwartz said that the Beltway Study demonstrated that in Fairfax people are oriented radially.

Supervisor Bulova noted that we create jobs here in Fairfax, so that people can live and work here, but with both partners working, we often find that one person works close to the home and the other person has a farther commute.

Jeff Nolan spoke about the problems with bridges, especially drawbridges, and the traffic impacts.

Stewart Schwartz said that years ago tunnels were deemed to be too expensive and that's why we have the bridge links in the region. He also spoke about the need for grade-separated intersections.

Clark Massie said that the amount of truck traffic traveling through the area makes the problem worse. He said that an eastern bypass was proposed to take that truck traffic off of the Wilson Bridge, but Maryland was opposed to an eastern bypass. However, the need to divert truck traffic is still there.

Supervisor Bulova said this was also an example of political dynamics at work, although perhaps not as we might want it to work.

Mervin Disenfeld said that the figures don't make sense to him regarding the percentage of land that is vacant. He asked for clarification.

Clark Massie reviewed the information and stated that 84% of the remaining vacant land is planned for residential uses. The remaining 16% of vacant land is planned for uses other than residential.

Stewart Schwartz said that Fairfax County is not built-out because there are three dimensions to growth. As the value of land increases and the need for open space remains important, then growth can occur vertically. Office "parks" can be built with underground parking and mixed use aboveground; ground floor shopping centers with office above.

Jan Hedetniemi referred to the ICC (Inter-County Connector), or eastern bypass, between Loudoun County and Maryland. She said that we need to "deep six" the fears about more sprawl. It's about economics and where affordable housing can go. It's also about who is willing to bend with higher densities and a variety of incomes.

Tom Law introduced himself as a resident of Prince George's County. He asked how many officials took transit to get to the task force meeting. Or got there by walking or biking. He asked why rapid transit is there for everyone else but not in the Fairfax area.

Supervisor Bulova stated that we are living in an existing development pattern that does not have the densities needed for Metro. We do, however have the Virginia Railway Express which many residents use for commuting. However, to get from subdivision to subdivisions and to the Braddock District government center, it is, for the most part, necessary to use cars. She went on to say that with transit "if you build it, they will come". She cited the growth in ridership on the VRE. Parking expansion is needed, but the funding is not available now.

David Bobzien said that we need to create opportunities. He said that when he commuted from Reston to downtown (the District), he took the bus. If he wanted to drive, he had to be on the road by 6 AM in order to use the HOV lanes before the time that the HOV restrictions were in place. He mentioned the Cross County Trail and how many people are using it to commute.

Just before leaving, Supervisor Connolly said that it's necessary to re-plan areas for transit. You have to superimpose infrastructure that's not there. This is what we are doing in the Tyson's/Dulles Corridor and it's very hard and expensive and it makes people unhappy.

As he left, Supervisor Bulova thanked him for attending and also acknowledged the presence of Janet Oleszak, a candidate for school board, who also had to leave.

Nell Hurley asked about childcare at VRE stations. She said that there is work-site childcare at Crystal City. Mini-mart is also needed at VRE.

Supervisor Bulova mentioned the lack of success of "roach coach" service at VRE stations.

Jim Zook said that we would have to look at the regulations to see how we could allow childcare as an accessory use at a station. The county has been very supportive of childcare and has allowed this as an accessory use in offices and encouraged the use in residential. Thus far, it's not been a use considered at metro stations.

Supervisor Bulova talked about the co-location issue. When she first became active in the community as the president of the Kings Park West civic association, a childcare provider, Children's World, wanted to locate a facility on Roberts Road within the residential community. Neighbors went crazy. They said it was commercialization of a residential neighborhood, so they opposed it and killed it. But she has come to believe that it wouldn't have been so bad. Now there are problems with so many homes being used for childcare in Kings Park West. Change is not always bad. The Braddock District Comprehensive Task Force has dealt with the issue of change.

Jim Zook said that there has been a change in thinking in the community regarding childcare.

David Bobzien recalled that when the Gesher Jewish Day School was proposed some people objected because they did not want to hear the sounds of children playing. The county government is reactive to what comes forward. The county doesn't seek out change. He then mentioned a personal experience with personnel and childcare issues. He now has two positions that are job shared by four women attorneys.

James Buratti said that we are living with the sins of the past. There is huge development going on at Route 66 and he wanted to know how we would deal with this development and no transit.

Stewart Schwartz said there is a better way to grow. He mentioned the 95/96 new fare. It is an old town design, but with the same amount of growth. There are separate pods of development that are not “walkable.” Better connections are needed.

David Bobzien said that this development is “by right.” We try to cajole, but if there are economic problems, it can’t work.

Jim Zook stated that the Fairfax Centre area received extensive review. The plan was for nodes of growth at Centreville and Fairfax Centre, with low density in between. East of the landfill, there was an increase of 1,000 units near a planned Metro station. At the Fairfax County Government Center, there is a big mound of dirt that is planned for the new fare. It will be a parking garage for metro. There is mixed use development starting to go in with *Plan* language for sufficient density there to support metro. But for now, the market won’t support the density. It might be 20 to 30 years before the market is there, so for now the developer doesn’t want the densities. The Fairfax Centre plan was the result of extensive work of a task force. We operate with a free market. Right now, structured parking costs \$15,000 per space. So a developer will build what the “by-right” zoning allows, rather than go with the higher density allowed in the *Plan* because of the infrastructure costs imposed with the higher planned densities.

Stewart Schwartz said that the county is overstating the free market. The higher residential prices in Alexandria signal people’s willingness to pay for convenience. He went on to say that there are emerging trends that show that Tyson’s is bad and town center design is good. He also noted the changing demographics in the Braddock District and eastward. He said this is a chance to reinvent the older communities that have gone into decline.

Walt Mika talked about the housing market in the Ballston, Vienna and other metro center areas. He said that his child can’t find housing he can afford. He said that what he was hearing was “head in the sand thinking” about getting people to “switch to centers.” How would you deal with the traffic? You can’t turn the world around – how would you do it?

Stewart Schwartz said it could be done by people moving and by the county allowing mixed use. He said that we need to look at accessory apartments added on to houses. He also suggested allowing multi-family dwellings (apartments and condos) on Braddock Road and Route 236.

Clark Massie said he has a son who is a policeman in Fairfax County, but who lives in Winchester. People want options. We can’t change patterns. On the south side of the Vienna Metro station, there is a *Plan* option to build single-family housing.

Mike Malak asked about the feasibility of adding retail to the Rolling Road VRE station?



Supervisor Bulova said that there are *Comprehensive Plan* issues. She said that neighbors have a major investment in their homes. When you buy your house, you buy the *Plan*. Also there isn't any room to site other uses there. Need to find another example. She did note that mixed use is being looked at for the Backlick VRE station. At that location, there is already a shopping center. The addition of some office and retail with housing above it is being studied.

Ivan Dietrich mentioned that there is a study to allow childcare at an Oakton location, but that it's not a workable enterprise because stringent health code regulations preclude its viability. Would it be possible to relax the code so that it would be doable?

Supervisor Bulova stated that childcare health regulations are covered under state code. She speculated on the likelihood of a member of the General Assembly sponsoring a bill in Richmond to *relax* health code regulations governing childcare.

Russell Klosk said that the Braddock District government office was in a good location because it enables people in the area to get assistance without adding to the traffic by going all the way out to the main county government center.

He then stated that he'd started out being unhappy about the way developers are building in the area, but after learning more about smart growth, smart growth is pushing him the other way. He said that he does not want Fairfax to be Arlington.

Supervisor Bulova thanked all of the panelists for their excellent presentations and participation. She invited them to stay and visit if they wished to after the discussion was finished.

She then turned to the "Next Step" discussion on the agenda. Based on what she'd heard during the sessions, she suggested that the group divide into three subgroups to consider making recommendations in three areas: **Land use and Transportation Planning**, **Transportation Funding** and **Legislative/Governmental Structural changes**. The task force concurred. Further clarification of the process and meeting room/staff support availability was provided. Supervisor Bulova released the group, so that members could choose a subgroup to join, caucus, choose group leaders and plan to meet. Supervisor Bulova said that she would meet with the group as a whole again on **April 30<sup>th</sup>**, to hear the subgroups report to the whole task force on their recommendations. A final vote on the full Community Dialog recommendations would be slated for the meeting of **May 14<sup>th</sup>**.

Chair: Supervisor Sharon Bulova

Staff:

Florence Naeve  
Joanne Swick  
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Miranda Hutten (Intern)

Participants:

Ms. Nancy Baltrusch  
Mr. George Barker  
Mr. Richard Bowes  
Mr. James Buratti  
Ms. Bernice Colvard  
Mr. Christopher Craig  
Mrs. Dorothy Dane  
Mr. Dan Desko  
Mr. Ivan Dietrich  
Mr. Mervin Dizenfeld  
Mr. Robert Griendling  
Ms. Suzanne Harsel  
Ms. Jan Hedetniemi  
Mr. Reid Herlihy  
Mr. Loren Hershey  
Ms. Nell Hurley  
Mr. Robert Kelly  
Mr. Paul Kite

Mr. Russell Klosk  
Mr. Michael Malak  
Ms. Phylliss McDevitt  
Mr. Chet McLaren  
Mr. Tom Meany  
Mr. Walter Mika  
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Mr. Peter Skoro  
Mr. Harry Stevenson  
Mr. Jeff Stoll  
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